FOCUSING ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

An extract from Our Plan for the Future 2005-2009

We will only achieve our vision if we exceed the expectations of more of our visitors. To achieve this we will focus on providing excellent customer service.

We are committed to:

- improving communications and acting on feedback
- being open and accountable
- increasing the quality and quantity of our facilities and services
- ensuring a growing waterway network is attractive and accessible
- having a secure and reliable waterway network

MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

We need to improve the quality and scope of our facilities and services before we focus on increasing our visitor numbers.

We will:

- deliver a better, consistent and sustainable service. We will start by focusing on customer service for our boating customers in 2005/06, and will extend this service to other visitors in 2006/07
- improve customer service training for our people
- put additional resources in place to increase visitor numbers from 2007/08 onwards

ENCOURAGING FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

We have introduced a simple and consistent complaints procedure for the whole organisation.

First complaints are handled locally. If a complainant remains unsatisfied then the complaint is reviewed by a director, without management responsibility for the issue concerned.

The new procedure improves the complainants access to the waterways ombudsman by reducing the number of steps involved.

In May 2005 we held the first full meeting of the British Waterways Advisory Forum (BWAF) which is attended by people representing groups who use the waterways. The Forum was a direct outcome of our openness and accountability consultation.

The British Waterways Advisory Forum will:

- be a framework for informed two-way communication between us and our national user groups
- hold two general meetings each year which will also be attended by our chairman, chief executive, along with some of our board members
- hold two smaller, intermediate, meetings to further explore issues raised, and to be raised, at the general meetings of the Forum

We focus on satisfying our customers. Marketing services assistant, Becky Mutlow, fully explains the process of buying a boat to a visitor to the Schroders London Boat Show. ▶

Specific Targets & Progress

	Targets	Progress
Excellent visitor satisfaction levels*	By 2008: Boat Owners 15% Towpath Users 66%	Boat Owners: 2003/04: 9% 2004/05: 7% Towpath Users: 2003/04: 42% 2004/05: 40%
Improved appreciation through changed attitudes**	By 2008: at least mid-point on the tracking survey	2003/04: 64 (versus mid-point of 82) 2004/05: 68 (versus mid-point of 84.5)
Percentage of complaints responded to within 20 days	100%	2003/04: not measured 2004/05: 90.4%
Reduce dog fouling	2005/06: reduce by 60% (compared to 2003)	No measure yet (will be measured in 2005/06)

* There has been no significant change in overall customer satisfaction during 2004. In general, scores rating our service as 'excellent' have declined. However, scores rating our service as 'poor' have improved. This reflects our approach to trying to get basic service right in late 2004, eg our approach to vegetation management

** We have a telephone tracking survey which traces movements in public perception of the value of canals and rivers compared with other nationally important assets. In 2003/04 the seaside was rated at the top of the scale at 100, followed by parks & gardens at 90, woods & forests at 86, historic houses, castles & other monuments at 78, zoos, wildlife parks and farms also at 78 and museums & galleries at 73. Valued at 64, canals & rivers started at the bottom of the list of those surveyed. Our vision is that by 2012 inland waterways will be regarded as one of the nation's most important and valued national assets, so although we are making progress we know we have some way to go, and our target is that by 2008 we will achieve mid-point of the survey index.

Customer Satisfaction Milestones	Date
Customer satisfaction targets in place	2005
British Waterways Advisory Forum established	2005
Achieve upper quartile in National Complaints Culture Survey	2006
Canals and rivers reach at least midpoint on 'public perception of value' tracking study (see above)	2008
Number of visits to our waterways has doubled compared to 2002	2012

If you like to know more about how our plans could affect you, please visit our website at www.britishwaterways.co.uk/plan